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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 001886

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/11/2028
TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAIR](#) [BE](#) [XF](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S FAREWELL CALL WITH BELGIAN FOREIGN
MINISTER DE GUCHT

Classified By: DCM Wayne Bush, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Belgium's Foreign Minister is still seeking participation by other European countries in providing a bridging military force for Eastern Congo. He views Congo as a failed state with the potential to be come another Somalia and believes failed states will be the biggest challenge facing the U.S. and Europe over the coming years. Although still opposed to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, he admits that the modest gains brought by diplomacy with Iran help to illustrate that everything cannot always be achieved by diplomacy alone. He also believes that the new U.S. President must focus on the Arab-Israeli conflict at the beginning of his term. He also offered to intervene in a long-standing airport security issue at Zaventem Airport which TSA has been seeking for some time. END SUMMARY.

AVIATION SECURITY

12. (C) The Ambassador, accompanied by DCM and Pol/Econ Counselor, made his farewell call on Belgium's Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht on December 10 to discuss aviation security among other issues. The Ambassador presented the issue of the two year long effort by the Embassy and TSA to bring Belgium into compliance with TSA security guidelines. De Gucht received the Ambassador's points positively and promised he would discuss the issue with the Director General for Civil Aviation among others.

CONGO

13. (C) De Gucht is still planning to pursue the formation of a European force to deploy to the eastern Congo in the interim before the expansion of the MONUC force there. He expects that bringing together such a force won't be easy and will take some weeks but he still expects to be able to organize a European force of 3,000 troops. He believes that the rebels in eastern Congo would not confront a force of that size.

14. (C) He views the Congo as a failed state. The risk for the West is that if the situation there is not managed carefully, Congo may turn into another Somalia. He met with former Nigerian President Obasanjo in New York two weeks ago and the latter described the Congo as a "hollow state," all wrapping with nothing inside. De Gucht believes that dealing with failed states and non-state actors will be the key challenge for the West in coming years, not China, Russia, or India. He does not believe the West has a solution for dealing with failed states.

15. (C) De Gucht criticized the U.S. approach to Africa, saying it was very unhelpful that some view Belgium and other European countries as merely former colonial powers in Africa. These countries have positive roles to play. In terms of the U.S. role in Africa, the DCM noted the substantial increases in U.S. economic development and humanitarian assistance to Africa in recent years, especially with regard to combating HIV/AIDS and malaria. He noted that senior foreign policy officials announced for the new administration also have strong commitments to Africa..

IRAQ, IRAN AND THE PEACE PROCESS

16. (C) De Gucht still views the U.S. invasion of Iraq as a mistake. However, he acknowledged that the limited success of diplomacy in slowing Iran's nuclear program proves that everything cannot be solved by diplomacy alone. Regarding the Arab-Israeli situation, De Gucht stressed that the new U.S. President must focus on that very early on in his term.